

**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Peter Keisler, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division, Department of Justice, announced that Vineet K. Chhabra, also known as Vincent K. Chhabra, age 33, of Golden Beach, Florida, and Sabina S. Faruqui, also known as Sabina K. Chhabra, age 30, of Weston, Florida, pled guilty today before the Honorable Leonie M. Brinkema, United States District Judge, to conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. According to the terms of the plea agreement, Vincent Chhabra faces a sentence of 33 months incarceration when sentenced on December 3, 2004. Sabina Faruqui, his sister, was sentenced to 12 months probation after entering her plea. In addition, two corporations affiliated with Vincent Chhabra's business pled guilty to conspiracy to launder money. Mr. Chhabra serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Chhabra Group, LLC, and as manager of VKC Consulting, LLC. All these defendants agreed to forfeit all proceeds of their illegal activity.

Vincent Chhabra admitted to running a business that operated websites and toll-free numbers through which he unlawfully distributed and dispensed controlled substances. During the course of the conspiracy, he and his co-conspirators illegally distributed and dispensed millions of pills, including phendimetrazine, a weight loss stimulant sold by its brand name Bontril. Other prescription drugs illegally distributed and dispensed included Viagra, Xenical, Propecia, and Celebrex.

Customers who ordered drugs from the websites were not required to provide a prescription before receiving the controlled substances. Instead, customers filled out an on-line questionnaire and chose the type, quantity, and dosage they desired to purchase. The prescriptions were dispensed under the authorizations of co-conspirators through pharmacies owned by other co-conspirators. Vincent Chhabra was also a partner in the websites get-it-on.com, cybrx.com, cybrxpress.com, rxclinic.com, eprescribe.com., rxleader.com, choicervx.com, and privacyrx.com.

Mr. McNulty stated, "This is a significant prosecution of prescription drug distribution over the Internet. These are tough penalties for this criminal conduct, and I hope it serves as a warning shot to all who think of the Internet as a good place to do bad business."

For a prescription to be valid, it must be issued for a legitimate medical purpose by an individual acting in the usual course of the professional practice. The prescriptions authorized by the physicians were not valid because they did not result from a legitimate doctor-patient relationship. Other than the on-line questionnaires, the physicians did not have any contact with the people ordering the medication, and did not monitor, or provide any means to monitor, medication response, weight loss or weight gain.

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Mr. McNulty added: “The Internet offers virtually limitless promise as a venue for commercial enterprise, but we cannot allow such promise to occur at the expense of consumer safety.”

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Food and Drug Administration’s Office of Criminal Investigations. Prosecuting this case for the United States were Assistant United States Attorneys Brian D. Miller and Karen Taylor, and Linda Marks and Jill Furman from the Consumer Litigation Section of the Justice Department’s Civil Division.

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